

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. July 1998 Idaho Federal Lands Task Force Report, *New Approaches for Managing Federally Administered Lands*

In July 1998, the Federal Lands Task Force appointed by the Idaho State Board of Land Commissioners published its report, *New Approaches for Managing Federally Administered Lands*. That report, issued after nearly two years of public meetings, review and deliberation by the Task Force, identified a major problem on lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in Idaho:

In the past three decades the delivery of goods and services, as well as intangible and intrinsic values from federally administered lands, has not met the changing expectations of the public in general, or of Idaho citizens in particular. The situation has destabilized Idaho communities, eliminated jobs, diminished economic returns, and reduced environmental quality.

*Task Force Report at 3.* The report included the following findings regarding this problem:

Finding 1. The current processes of federal land management have resulted in uncertain decision making, destabilization of resource dependent communities, and deterioration in environmental quality on federal lands.

In short, the system is broken.

Finding 2. Significant changes to these processes are necessary. The changes proposed [by the Forest Service and BLM] are not adequate.

*Id.* The federal land management problem identified in the Task Force Report is commonly known as "gridlock." Current Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth calls it "analysis paralysis." Whatever the label, the Forest Service recognizes that it operates within a decision-making framework that "has kept the agency from effectively addressing rapid declines in forest health. This same framework impedes nearly every other aspect of multiple-use management as well." U.S.D.A. Forest Service (2002). *The Process Predicament: How Statutory, Regulatory, and Administrative Factors Affect National Forest Management.*

The Task Force Report examined alternative methods of managing federal lands in Idaho, within a framework that included the following important principles:

- Ownership of federal lands will not be transferred to the State of Idaho;
- A variety of uses will continue on lands currently managed for multiple use;
- The public will be involved in the decision-making process.

The Task Force Report recommended that the Board of Land Commissioners pursue pilot projects testing one or more of the following three alternative approaches to federal land management described in the Report:

- *Collaborative management*, in which stakeholder parties work in a group with the federal agencies to strive for greater consensus regarding management;
- *Cooperative management*, in which state and federal agencies commit to manage an area of federal land under a joint powers agreement, coordinating and where appropriate consolidating administration;
- *Trust land management*, similar to the fiduciary approach employed to manage state forest and range lands throughout the West, with relatively clear missions and objectives.

In March 1999, the Idaho Legislature passed House Concurrent Resolution No. 8, endorsing further action to implement the Task Force Report recommendations:

We endorse the report submitted by the Federal Lands Task Force to the Idaho Board of Land Commissioners, support further action by the Idaho Board of Land Commissioners on the proposals contained in the report, and urge the Congress of the United States to pass legislation implementing the recommendations contained in the report.

**B. December 2000 Federal Lands Task Force Working Group Report,  
*Breaking the Gridlock: Federal Land Pilot Projects in Idaho***

In September 1999, the Board of Land Commissioners appointed the Federal Lands Task Force Working Group, to identify pilot projects for Idaho's federal lands to test the three alternative approaches identified in the Task Force Report. After soliciting and reviewing pilot project proposals from around Idaho, the Working Group completed a December 2000 Report to the Board of Land Commissioners, *Breaking the Gridlock: Federal Land Pilot Projects in Idaho*. The findings in the Working Group Report confirmed the continuing need to pursue alternative ways to manage federal lands in Idaho, to address "gridlock" and related issues. The Report described five pilot projects that the Working Group recommended to consider for implementation:

- Clearwater Basin Stewardship Collaborative
- Central Idaho Ecosystem Trust
- Priest Lake Basin Cooperative
- St. Joe Ecosystem Stewardship Project
- Twin Falls/Cassia Resource Enhancement Trust

These five proposed projects encompass a range of geographic areas extending from northern to southern Idaho (see map from the Working Group Report, Appendix A). Each project was proposed as a test of one of the three Task Force alternative approaches: collaborative, cooperative, or trust lands.

The Working Group Report was circulated for public comment for about a six week period from December 2000 to early February 2001. Over 500 comments were received from within and outside Idaho. Over 80% of the comments received were favorable.

### **C. Authorizing Actions to Implement Working Group Report Recommendations**

At its February 2001 meeting, the Board of Land Commissioners adopted the following Working Group recommendations regarding the December 2000 Report:

- Approve the Report;
- Transmit the Report to the Congressional Delegation for its consideration;
- Direct the Department of Lands to support implementation of the Report in Congress;
- Recommend that the Congress continue to take public comment as they progress in their study of the report.

In December 2001, the Idaho Department of Lands awarded a contract for consultant services to implement the findings and recommendations of the Working Group Report, to Perkins Coie LLP. The present report describes the actions and accomplishments regarding implementation that we have achieved in cooperation with Working Group members, the Idaho Congressional Delegation, and many constituencies. It also outlines further implementation steps for the Department of Lands and the Board of Land Commissioners to consider.